Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Between 1910 and 1930 over a million African American sharecroppers and tenant farmers migrated from the rural South to cities north of the Mason Dixon line. Precipitated by Crop destroying floods and boll weevil infestations, a labor depression began in the South in 1914 causing wages to fall dramatically. Concurrently, the onset of World War I stimulated an economic boom in the North. With many northern industrial workers drawn into the war as soldiers and transatlantic travel too dangerous for immigrant laborers, the factories suddenly became desperate for people to run their machines. In response, hundreds of thousands of African Americans fled the oppressive climate of racial prejudice in the Jim Crow South for what looked to be better opportunities in the North.

By 1920 there were approximately 10,463,131 total African American residents in the United States. Overall, Blacks made up 9.9 percent of the total population. Prior to 1920, most had lived in rural areas in the South. By 1920, however, a large percentage of the African American population was concentrated in the following eight cities: Chicago, Detroit, New York, Cleveland, Cincinnati,

Columbus, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. This “Great Migration” was one of the largest internal

movements of people in the history of the United States.

1. What two reasons did African American sharecroppers migrate from the South?
2. What two reasons were factories desperate for people to run their machines?
3. Where did most African Americans live priors to 1920?

As African Americans began their lives as urban industrial workers in the North, they

were faced with many challenges. Living conditions in poor neighborhoods in northern cities

were horrendous. Like poor immigrants, African Americans lived in self-contained communities, commonly known as ghettos. African Americans, however, suffered the additional indignities of racism. In addition, whites segregated African Americans within the industrial workplace. There were separate washrooms, for instance, and Blacks were generally relegated to areas of the factory that required the most labor intensive and dangerous activity. Many African Americans ran north to escape the Jim Crow south, only to discover that segregation existed *de facto* in their new home and that discrimination and prejudice were nationwide.

The economic incentives of the industrial labor force in the North as far outweighing the poor social conditions in the South as a motivator for many African Americans who made the move. Advertisements and propaganda from both Blacks and whites also played a significant role in fueling and extending the impact of the potential financial gains presented by the labor demands in the North. African American newspapers like *The Chicago Defender’s National Edition*, read widely in the South, displayed help wanted ads from the North alongside detailed accounts of lynching in the South, creating a push pull effect. These ads and articles served several purposes: 1) to inform and encourage African Americans to migrate north, 2) to protest the horrible conditions in the South, and

In 1917 the *Christian Recorder* wrote, “If a million Negroes move north and west in the next twelve month, it will be one of the greatest things for the Negro since the Emancipation Proclamation.”

1. What group did African Americans live like in Northern Cities?
2. How were African Americans segregated in Northern factories?
3. What was the major motivator for African Americans to move North?
4. What two things did newspaper ads say to convince African Americans to move North?

Resentment over the perceived loss of jobs, the expanding migrant populations, and a

distinct infusion of African American culture, exploded into race riots. In 1919 they erupted in

New York, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Charlestown, Omaha, in East St. Louis, and in

Chicago among other places. In the city of Chicago alone, “After a week of sheer terror

throughout the city, twenty-three whites and twenty-five Negroes were dead, 537 persons

injured, and an estimated 1,000 left homeless.” By the end of the year, race riots had

damaged at least 25 cities throughout the North and West. Many lay dead or injured among the

millions of dollars in damages. Ku Klux Klan membership increased, attracting hundreds to

march openly in the streets and threatening African Americans with a reign of terror.

African Americans, however, fought back, promoting defiance among their ranks and

sending a clear message that they would not shrink from discrimination, bigotry, and blatant

violence.

Socially, African Americans experiencing discrimination even in the North helped to

fuel the growing consensus that inequality was unacceptable and that Blacks, with the help of

sympathetic whites, must work together to end Jim Crow segregation. Culturally, the power of

African American music, literature and art burst from the urban neighborhoods of the North and

impacted the identity of American art forever through the Harlem Renaissance. The largest

internal migration in United States history changed the political, social and cultural scene

permanently.

1. For what reasons did race riots break out?
2. What impacted the identity of American art forever?
3. What changed the history of the United states political, social and cultural scene?